

# DDT in clams worries agency

By Susan Frey  
Staff writer

The state Department of Fish and Game plans to ask the state Department of Health if high levels of DDT found in Richmond Harbor clams pose enough danger to warrant health warnings. The clams studied have the highest levels of DDT ever found in the Bay and some of the highest levels of the banned pesticide discovered anywhere in the state. Levels as high as 26 parts per million have been found in clams living in the sediments of the Lauritzen Canal near a former chemical mixing company, according to a report by Aqua Terra Technologies of Pleasant Hill. The federal Food and Drug Administration — which sets no DDT levels for shellfish — warns people not to eat fish with 5 parts per million of DDT or more. Although there is some concern that fish in the

canal also might have high levels of DDT, state Fish and Game Department supervisor Pete Phillips said fish typically move around in their search for food, mixing contaminated clams with toxic-free shellfish. Clams, on the other hand, stay in the contaminated area and therefore typically show the highest levels of pollutants. However, Phillips said, no samples of fish in the area have been taken to determine how high the levels of DDT may be. He said his department will send the study to the state Department of Health, which will decide if people should be warned about eating the fish. Because of bacteriological contamination, the health department already has issued warnings about eating shellfish in the area. And Ronald Block, a toxicologist with Aqua Terra Technologies, said another study by his company showed very low levels of DDT in

mussels living in canal waters. The highest-reading in the canal mussels was 0.7 parts per million, he said. That finding indicates the DDT is primarily in the sediments — where the clams feed — and not in the water. Another study by Harding Lawson also indicates the main problem is in soil and sediments. That study found 88,000 parts per million of the banned pesticide in soils at the former United Heckathorn plant, which ceased operating in the 1960s. "That plant hasn't been operating for 20 years," said Larry Kolb, an engineer with the state Water Resources Control Board. "That demonstrates how lethal and dangerous DDT can be." The persistent cancer-causing chemical remains in the tissue of fish and birds that eat the clams.

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# Richmond clams high in DDT

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